

CHAPTER 13: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Citywide Historic Preservation Plan asked the question, “How do we reconcile historic preservation goals with other goals of Fort Worth?” The simple answer to that question is that these goals are essentially the same: a vision of Fort Worth that is responsive to economic growth, central city revitalization, sustainable neighborhoods, and the celebration of the City’s heritage. In considering the policies and goals of the preservation program, City leaders and preservationists have striven for a balance of sustainable growth, protection of resources, investment in compatible new development, and incentives for the rehabilitation of historic property. This chapter defines the resources of the City’s historic preservation program, identifies the tools and methods of protecting and growing those resources, and describes the existing policies and goals for future historic preservation efforts in Fort Worth.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

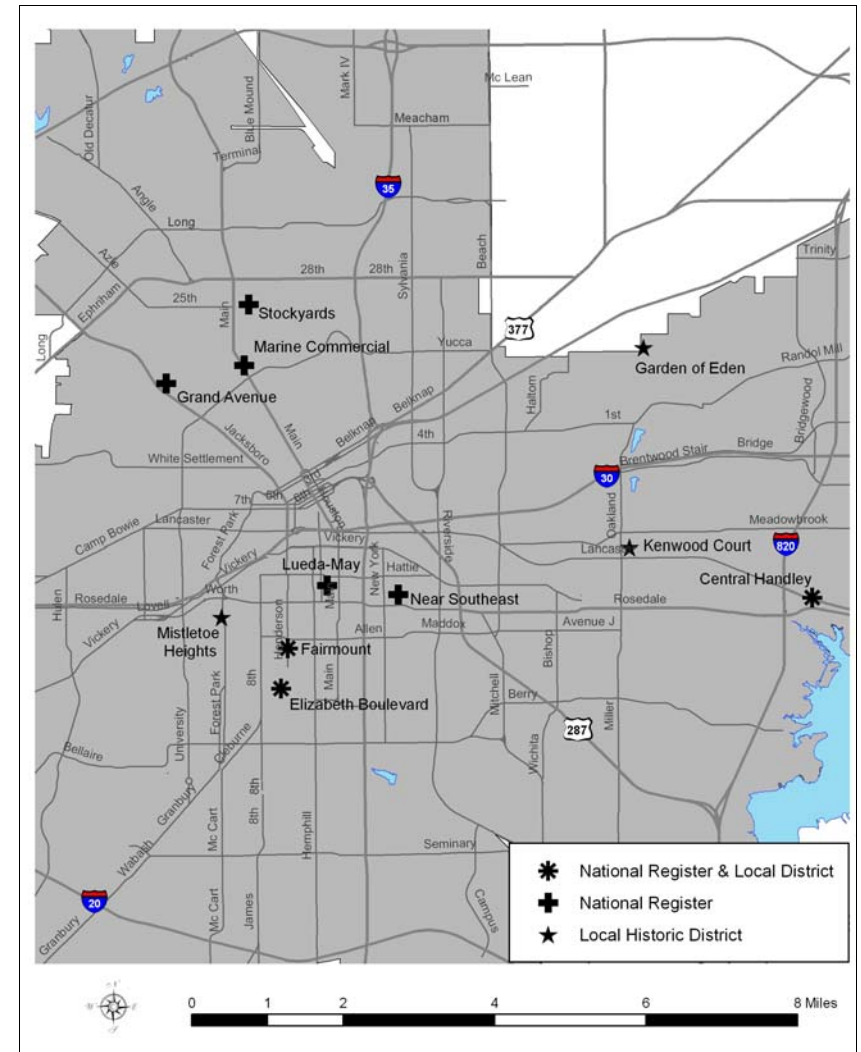
Historic preservation has been at the heart of City policy throughout much of Fort Worth’s history. From the careful preservation of the Nineteenth Century Van Zandt Cottage for the Texas Centennial in 1936, through the redevelopment of Sundance Square beginning in 1978, on to the adoption of the Citywide Historic Preservation Plan by the City Council in 2003, the City has been focused on preserving its heritage. The first attempts to catalog historic resources in the city came in the 1960s when the Junior League asked noted architect Blake Alexander to identify the most significant historic buildings. In 1976, the North Fort Worth Historical Society was formed and completed a survey of resources that would culminate in the nomination of the Fort Worth Stockyards to the National Register of Historic Places. Local efforts began in earnest in 1980 with the first local historic district, Elizabeth Boulevard, however, the most significant changes occurred in the 1990s when the Preservation Ordinance was rewritten following the demolition of the historic Quality Hill neighborhood. The new ordinance created a stronger, more effective preservation program.

Basic Resources for Historic Preservation

A solid historic preservation program utilizes resources that provide information and desirable approaches to decision-making for historic properties. Within the City there is a wealth of resources that include local, state, and national support for preservation.

The federal government provides a mechanism for appropriate historic rehabilitation in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which acts as a guide to regulation, but it is the Certified Local Government Program (CLG), which provides technical and financial assistance to local programs. The CLG program provides a top-down resource structure for communities by providing funding, training, and technical assistance via the State Historic Preservation Office. Local communities that participate in the program receive the highest priority for funding from historic preservation grants. To be a CLG, the City has adopted a preservation ordinance and design guidelines, engaged a professional staff to monitor its program, and reports

Fort Worth Historic Districts



Local historic districts and National Register historic districts are depicted above, indicating the highest concentration of historic properties is located within the central city. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

annually to the State Historic Preservation Office on preservation activities.

The National Park Service (NPS) lists buildings and sites of local, state, and national significance on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an honorary designation that does not require public access to a property, nor an obligation to restore property according to any restrictive guidelines. Benefits of the designation include federal recognition, eligibility for financial incentives such as tax credits, technical assistance from the Texas Historical Commission, promotional advantages to draw customers, and protection from the impacts of federally funded projects. In Fort Worth, historic areas listed on the Register include the Near Southeast, the Stockyards, and the Grand Avenue National Register Districts.

The National Historic Landmark (NHL) Program is used to designate buildings and sites that are of national importance, such as the San Jacinto Battlefield and the Alamo. Only three percent of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are designated as National Historic Landmarks. In addition to the prestige gained by the designation, other benefits include the availability of grants through the Historic Preservation Fund and technical preservation assistance provided by the National Park Service. There are no NHL designations in Fort Worth; however, places such as the Stockyards may be eligible.

The State of Texas recognizes historically significant buildings with Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) and State Archeological Landmark (SAL) designations. In addition, the State Marker Program has placed about 11,000 Official Texas Historical Markers across the State to provide educational links to the state's history.

One of the most comprehensive sources of information for historic structures within Tarrant County is the *Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey*. Begun in 1981, it took nine years to complete, but ultimately surveyed more than 50,000 buildings in the county. Further investigation identified 1,700 historically or architecturally significant structures eligible for local, state, or national designation. Despite its age, the *Survey* remains one of the most useful documents for historic identification to preservationists in Fort Worth and the surrounding communities. A primary goal of the Citywide Historic Preservation Plan is to update and expand the survey to include additional neighborhoods and newly recognized structures that may be eligible for designation.

The *Survey* was initiated by the Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, which at the time was an important community partner to the City. The Preservation Council no longer exists, however its legacy has inspired community organizations to promote and practice historic preservation in Fort Worth. Organizations including the North Fort Worth Historical Society, Historic Landmarks, Inc., Historic Fort Worth, Inc., the Southside Preservation Association, and the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. work with the City and citizens to engage public commentary and volunteerism in the name of historic preservation. These organizations have proven invaluable in completing the preservation of sites like the

National Register Districts



There are currently eight National Register Districts in Fort Worth. The Near Southeast Historic District (left), listed in 2002, was first platted around 1880 and flourished under the spread of the street car system. By 1910, it was a predominantly African-American working class neighborhood. It is not a locally designated historic district. The Grand Avenue Historic District (right) was listed in 1990, and most of the houses were built between 1906-1919. The district is designated Demolition Delay by the City. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)



The Fort Worth Stockyards District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 and exemplifies the City's Western heritage. The District contains 42 buildings, most of which have some level of local designation. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

Bell-Eddleman-McFarland House, one of the last Quality Hill houses; Our Lady of Victory, a convent turned arts center; and the proposed use of the former Our Mother of Mercy School as a part of a new public library branch. Another valuable partner in preservation— the National Trust for Historic Preservation— maintains a regional office in downtown Fort Worth and has been a significant partner in preserving buildings, archaeological sites and neighborhoods through technical assistance, grants, and research.

In 1999, the City of Fort Worth participated in a statewide initiative to document the economic impacts of historic preservation throughout Texas. The study examined property values, historic museums, building rehabilitation, and heritage tourism and came to the conclusion that historic preservation makes sound economic sense. According to the study, an estimated \$193 million is spent annually on historic rehabilitation in Texas. Heritage travelers spend nearly \$1.25 billion annually. On average, building values within designated historic districts appreciate at higher rates than building values not located within districts. In Fort Worth, this is seen in houses in the Elizabeth Boulevard Historic District, which have values that are 22 percent higher than houses of comparable size that are not located in a district, and in the Fairmount-Southside Historic District where values are 6.8 percent higher than non-district houses.

Tools for Historic Preservation

Cities must engage the right tools to manage a historic preservation program. In 2002, Mayor Kenneth Barr appointed a volunteer steering committee to oversee the preparation of a citywide preservation plan. The plan was produced, as required by the Zoning Ordinance, to provide direction to the long-term efforts of historic preservation in Fort Worth. The steering committee was given the task of ensuring that the plan addressed the current status of historic preservation, as well as defined the weaknesses of the program and identified goals for historic preservation. The resulting product, the Citywide Historic Preservation Plan, is used by the City and community to promote the role of historic preservation in Fort Worth, and to address the needs of the City's historic resources through project planning, resource allocation, and organizational needs.

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance set out the powers of the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission to administer the preservation program. Chapter 4, Article 5, otherwise known as the Preservation Ordinance, contains the basic building blocks for local historic preservation, including the designation process for three types of designation: Highly Significant Endangered (HSE), Historic and Cultural Landmark (HC) and Demolition Delay (DD). The ordinance also contains the processes for acquiring a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes to property and receiving the Historic Site Tax Exemption.

Properties designated as HSE are recognized as some of the most important historic structures and sites in Fort Worth. They have also been deemed as some of the most endangered due to prolonged vacancy or deterioration. They must embody at least five of the ten criteria for designation and have documented evidence of

National Register Districts



Central Handley (above) was designated as a Fort Worth historic district in 2001 and a National Register District in 2002. It is a commercial district built between 1910-1930 and was home to the easternmost stop in the City of the Dallas-Fort Worth Interurban. (Source: City of Fort Worth, 2001.)



The Marine Commercial District along North Main Street (top) was a pivotal commercial area of North Fort Worth and was listed on the National Register in 2001. The Leuda-May District (bottom) was listed in 2005 and is a collection of early 20th century apartment buildings. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

endangerment. Often HSE buildings are large structures that have proven difficult to redevelop and therefore the City offers special economic incentives for the stabilization and rehabilitation. Properties designated as HSE include the T&P Terminal on West Lancaster Avenue and the Farmers & Mechanics Building on Main Street. Examples of successful rehabilitations of HSE buildings include the Lockheart Gables Bed & Breakfast on Locke Avenue and the Blackstone Hotel in downtown.

The Historic and Cultural Landmark designation has been applied to individual properties and districts. HC properties and districts are important to the history, architecture, and culture of Fort Worth. To be designated HC, a property must meet three of the ten designation criteria. For a district nomination, at least two properties within the district must meet three of the ten criteria. In 2004, the City designated its first largely cultural historic district called the Garden of Eden, which is significant for its importance to the African-American heritage of Tarrant County and the City of Fort Worth. Other HC designated properties include the Electric Building on West 7th Street and the Fairmount-Southside Historic District located south of Magnolia Avenue.

Demolition Delay properties have been identified as resources that meet at least two of the ten designation criteria. Under the Demolition Delay designation, the City may delay the structure's demolition for up to 180 days in order to pursue alternatives. This time frame may be shortened or waived at the discretion of the City.

In total, the City has designated more than 2,600 historic properties and the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission carefully monitors each property. The Landmarks Commission consists of nine citizens appointed by the Mayor and the City Council. It is their responsibility to recommend eligible properties for historic designation based on documented significance and the designation criteria. They are also responsible for granting Certificates of Appropriateness for exterior changes to historic property based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and where applicable, historic district design guidelines. They also verify projects for the historic site tax exemption.

The historic site tax exemption is used as a tool to promote owner investment into a historic property. Both HSE and HC designated properties are eligible to receive tax incentives on the City portion of the *ad valorem* taxes based on pre-renovation assessed values. This incentive provides the opportunity to encourage a substantial investment into the property and ensures that projects are consistent with appropriate historic preservation practices.

Current Trends in Historic Preservation

Continuing the useful life of historic buildings is a creative process that requires a joint effort by the City, nonprofit organizations, and private developers. The most challenging adaptive use projects involve large buildings originally designed for specific uses like vacant warehouses, historic railroad terminals, and old theaters. In

Fort Worth Historic & Cultural Landmark Districts



There are six local historic districts in Fort Worth. Elizabeth Boulevard (top), named after the wife of its developer John Ryan, was the City's first historic district and is also listed on the National Register. Fairmount-Southside (middle) was locally and nationally designated in 1990 and remains one of the largest residential historic districts in the country. Mistletoe Heights (bottom) was designated by the City in 2002 and is an excellent example of a middle to upper class early 20th century neighborhood. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

Fort Worth, the Texas & Pacific Terminal, the Santa Fe Depot and the Montgomery Ward building are examples of historic buildings for which adaptive use projects are in progress.

Challenges faced in adapting historic buildings to new uses include bringing the buildings into compliance with current code requirements, removing hazardous materials such as lead paint and asbestos, and installing the cutting edge technology required for telecommunications and computer networks. These barriers create the need for a proactive and innovative approach by developers and architects, in partnership with City officials who administer fire and life safety codes. The City adopted Chapter 34 of the International Building Code, which relates specifically to historic buildings and allows some leniency in the code requirements for historic buildings. Financial incentives at the local, state, and federal levels can be used to offset these often-costly rehabilitation projects. The Homes of Parker Commons is an adaptive use project where the Fort Worth High School building on Jennings Avenue and the Alexander Hogg School building on West Terrell Avenue have been rehabilitated and converted into apartments that provide much-needed housing near the Medical District in Fort Worth's Southside.

On occasion, historic buildings are removed instead of reused. The demolition of historic buildings happens throughout the country for many reasons, and what is built in replacement often becomes the target of intense scrutiny. Efforts to have sensitive and compatible infill development within historic neighborhoods are sometimes seen as overly obtrusive, but often necessary in order to maintain the historic character of an area that will draw business, residents, and tourists. Locally, regulatory mechanisms are used to ensure quality infill within historic neighborhoods. Within historic districts, the Landmarks Commission has the authority to require new construction to adhere to the district's design guidelines. For individually designated properties, the Landmarks Commission relies upon the guidance of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Preservation programs routinely use Conservation Districts to facilitate the preservation of neighborhood character. The districts focus on the appropriate scale and mass of infill development relative to the neighborhood environment. Conservation Districts are not intended to prescribe design guidelines for specific architecture, nor are they used to protect individual buildings. However, this type of district can successfully preserve the streetscape and physical character of a neighborhood. In Fort Worth, Conservation Districts are not widely used because it is a relatively new type of zoning overlay in the City, but the promotion of this alternative to a historic district may foster interest from neighborhoods with greater opportunities for infill development.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Citywide Historic Preservation Plan identifies goals and implementation strategies in five areas: historic resources survey, the preservation ordinance,

Fort Worth Historic & Cultural Landmark Districts



Kenwood Court was designated as a Historic and Cultural Landmarks District in 1991. The 15 houses within the district were constructed during the 1920-1940s. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)



The newest local historic district is the Garden of Eden. It was designated by the City Council in 2005 and is the first African-American cultural district in Fort Worth. The district celebrates the history and culture of the Cheney family, members of which have lived on this land for more than 150 years. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

economic incentives for historic preservation, historic preservation within City policies and decisions, and public education. Throughout 2005, a major initiative was undertaken to address each area for implementation, and to that end, substantial action has been taken to address the designation of historic schools, changes to the preservation ordinance and economic incentives, the passage of an internal City policy to address historic sites and structures; and the creation of printed materials for public awareness of the preservation program. However, further implementation is necessary for additional goals stated within the plan.

Maintain a historic resources survey that is comprehensive, current, accurate, cost-effective and readily accessible to potential users.

- City staff and preservation organizations identify potential funding sources for an updated historic resources survey and revolving loan fund by 2007.
- City staff and preservation organizations conduct on-going training for neighborhood leaders and citizen volunteers to identify historic elements and document structures, sites, and streetscapes.

Enforce the preservation ordinance in a manner that is effective and fair.

- Provide on-going training for relevant City staff and commissions who deal with the enforcement of the preservation ordinance and design guidelines.

Educate the public on technical issues, the benefits of preservation and the true diversity of Fort Worth's history.

- In cooperation with Fort Worth's preservation organizations, develop educational programming, such as technical workshops and seminars.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The Citywide Historic Preservation Plan and the Preservation Ordinance identify policies and strategies to enable the City to effectively administer a historic preservation program that will achieve the above goals and objectives.

Current Policies

- Protect, enhance and perpetuate landmarks and districts of historical, cultural, architectural, or archaeological importance to Fort Worth.
- Maintain a generally harmonious outward appearance of both historic and modern structures that are compatible and complementary in scale, form, color, proportion, texture, and material.
- Foster civic pride by recognizing accomplishments of the past.

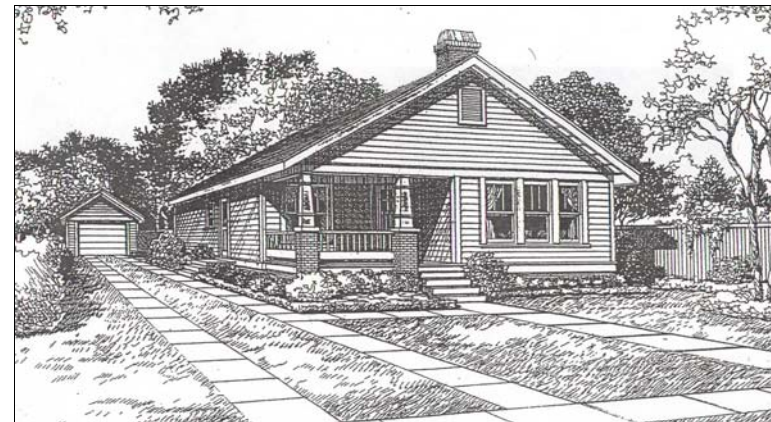
Current Strategies

- Facilitate the designation of significant districts, sites, and structures with an overlay for Demolition Delay, Historic and Cultural Landmark, or Highly Significant Endangered.
- Educate the public about the importance of designating historic resources.
- Require infill development to adhere to the design guidelines for new

Compatible Infill Development



Compatible infill development, like the house shown here from the Fairmount-Southside Historic District, is required to follow the same design guidelines as additions to historic structures to ensure it will fit into the district. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)



Fort Worth South, Inc. developed a series of house plans for compatible infill development in 2004. The designs respect the style of architecture and scale of existing housing stock within the Fort Worth South area. The designs have been used for new construction within the Fairmount-Southside District and are quite popular for their function and beauty.

(Source: Fort Worth South, Inc., 2005.)

construction within historic districts.

- Work with proposed historic districts to develop design guidelines that effectively address compatible infill development.
- Educate developers of infill housing to the benefits of compatible design.
- Promote the recognition of Historic Preservation Month in May.
- Pursue historic designation for architecturally and historically significant buildings and sites.
- Pursue the development of historic districts for thematic purposes, such as Hispanic-American cultural resources, Transportation related resources, or Modern Architecture.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Historic preservation programs and projects rely heavily on volunteers from the community. Much of the work accomplished by these programs results in the identification of historic resources, new designations, increased protection of existing resources and better documentation of the historic structures within the City of Fort Worth.

Incentives Program

The City of Fort Worth offers a program of economic incentives for properties designated as Highly Significant Endangered (HSE) and Historic and Cultural Landmarks (HC). The incentives offer relief to a property owner against the City's *ad valorem* taxes. Proposed rehabilitation projects are reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Commission. The City Council also approves the application for the historic site tax exemption.

In 2005, the City Council adopted revised incentives for properties designated as HSE. Under the new rules, when a HSE property is stabilized, the property owner is afforded a 100 percent abatement on the City portion of the property taxes on the improvements for ten years and a 50 percent tax freeze on the land for up to five years. Once a substantial rehabilitation of the property has been completed, the incentive is increased to allow the abatement on the improvements to continue for ten years with a five-year bonus available for timely completion of the project and a tax freeze on 100 percent of the increase in the value of the land for the same period of time. This incentive is transferable and remains with the land upon sale.

Properties designated as HC, either individually or as part of a district, are eligible for a ten-year City tax freeze at the pre-renovation value of the land and improvements assessed valuation with the completion of a substantial rehabilitation project. This is defined as an investment into the property equal to or greater than 30 percent of the assessed value of the improvements.

Designation Committee

The Designation Committee consists of seven citizen volunteers with an avid interest or professional expertise in historic preservation appointed by the Chair of the

Messer House



The Messer House, now known as the Lockheart Gables Bed and Breakfast, is a HSE designated building that was rehabbed using the HSE tax incentives. The house was built in 1893 and designed by Albert Messer. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

American Airways Hangar at Meacham Airport



American Airlines' history began in a hangar at Meacham Airport. In 2005, the City documented and nominated the hangar to the National Register of Historic Places and locally as a Historic and Cultural Landmark as a significant part of the City's aviation and development history. (Source: Aviation Department, 2005).

Landmarks Commission. The purpose of this committee is to identify and nominate eligible properties to the local inventory of historic designations. In 2005, the committee began to identify and document historic structures within each of the City's designated urban villages. It is anticipated that the identification will result in a Demolition Delay or Historic and Cultural Landmark designation for each of these properties. Other projects in 2005 include documenting historic resources within the Medical District Tax Increment Financing District for Demolition Delay designations; designating the Lake Como Cemetery as a Historic and Cultural Landmark— and the City's first designated cemetery— and identifying historic Fire Stations and City Park structures. In 2006, multiple local nominations will be completed for resources documented in the 2005 work plan.

Schools Designation Committee

The Schools Designation Committee consists of nine representatives from the Designation Committee, Fort Worth ISD Board of Trustees, Fort Worth ISD staff, and volunteer citizens. It was formed in 2005 to function as a subcommittee of the Designation Committee that is charged with identifying historic school facilities and completing a local designation nomination. In 2005, the Committee identified 42 Fort Worth ISD facilities worthy of historic designation and recommended each for Demolition Delay designation. In 2006, the Committee will review maintenance policies for historic school campuses and make recommendations for the adoption of appropriate maintenance guidelines.

Focus Group on Preservation Incentives

In response to the Citywide Historic Preservation Plan's recommendation that the economic incentives for historic preservation be strengthened, the City Council's Central City Revitalization and Economic Development Committee appointed a focus group charged with the review of the current incentives and the recommendation of appropriate changes. The focus group consists of representatives of historic preservation and development interests in Fort Worth. In 2005, the focus group made six major recommendations to strengthen economic incentives including the pursuit of changes to the state sales tax on labor and the state receivership statute; changes to the HSE economic incentive; additional staffing to review and monitor central city and historic preservation projects; revisions to Code Compliance policies; and the prioritization of historic neighborhoods within the capital improvements program.

Preservation Education Committee

The Preservation Education Committee was formed in 2005 by the Landmarks Commission to implement recommendations of the Citywide Historic Preservation Plan dealing with public outreach and education. The first task of the committee was to create a series of technical brochures for appropriate rehabilitation of historic properties and economic incentives for historic preservation. Throughout 2005 and 2006, the committee will focus on developing public workshops and neighborhood training about the designation process, documenting historic resources, and appropriate rehabilitation.

Historic Fort Worth Schools



In 2005, the City and Fort Worth ISD nominated 42 historic schools as Demolition Delay, including the historic Hubbard Heights Elementary and Polytechnic High Schools. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)

The Homes of Parker Commons



The Homes of Parker Commons is an example of a creative adaptive use project for retired schools and the innovative ways a HSE designation can assist in the redevelopment of a vacant historic property. The apartment complex, located in Fort Worth South, used two historic school buildings. (Source: Planning Department, 2005.)